



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Maryland's Social Services Agency



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release:

May 6, 2009

For more information:

Paula Tolson

410-767-7758

ptolson@dhr.state.md.us

HARFORD COUNTY FAMILY RETIRES AFTER 40 YEARS AS FOSTER PARENTS TO OVER 200 CHILDREN

BALTIMORE – May has been designated National Foster Parent Appreciation Month. After more than 40 years of service to the children of Harford County, Alice and Clarence Ashford are retiring as Harford County DSS foster/adoptive parents. The Ashfords provided care for more than 200 children and adopted four children, including a sibling group of three during their time as a foster/adoptive family.

“Our foster parents are an invaluable resource to the children of Maryland,” says Brenda Donald, secretary of the Maryland Department of Human Resources. “They are the lynchpin to providing care and security that children need to thrive.”

The Ashfords, who married in 1956, initially became foster parents because they had room in their home and love for children. They continued fostering children while raising their four biological children and ultimately decided to become adoptive parents. After the passing of her parents in 1969, Mrs. Ashford also gained custody of her younger brother and her disabled sister.

Over their four decades of service, the Ashfords’ dedication to children grew. They opened their home to children of all ages, races, and needs. The Ashfords have seen many changes in the foster care system over the years, but state the need for children to have safe, nurturing, and loving homes has not changed.

Sabrina Bauld, a HCDSS foster/adoptive mother stated, “As newly certified foster parents, my husband and I were fortunate enough to benefit from Mrs. Ashford’s over 40 years [of experience] as a Harford County Foster Parent. Not only has she opened her heart and home to the children of Harford County but has opened it also to other foster parents. Mrs. Ashford has never forgotten a child that has been in her home or their circumstances. ‘Nana Ashford’ is often seen at foster care functions with framed photographs taken off her wall of children who have shared parts of their lives with her. She is always ready to show a picture or tell a story to anyone willing to listen. . . She has always been ready, willing, and able to open her heart and home to the foster children and foster community as a whole with the offer of a safe place to stay.”

Although her health will not allow her to continue providing foster care, Mrs. Ashford will continue to support children by mentoring new foster parents through the Harford County Foster Parent Association. “It is easy to see why the Alfords were honored as our 2008 Foster Parent of the Year,” said Donald. “Their commitment to children and to child welfare in general have been invaluable.”

#

The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state’s social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland’s fourth largest state agency.